

Cold Comfort

by N. Y. Smith

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Summary: Jack McCoy seeks comfort at the end of a difficult day.

Cold Comfort

Title: Law and Order: Cold Comfort 1/1

Author: N. Y. Smith

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Spoilers: A few for Claire Kincaid's death

Notes: This little vignette just sprang from my computer unbidden this afternoon. Now that it's out of the way, maybe I can go back to my long story. Angst warning.

Disclaimer: Not mine. (If they were Mikey would still be around.)

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Cold Comfort 1/1

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It lurked in his bottom desk drawer, beneath a clean shirt and a

half-consumed bottle of Scotch. *It* was sheathed in a battered manila folder, unmarked and tear-stained. *It* was a case long ago adjudicated but far from closed-at least as far as his heart was concerned. Not that anyone thought he had one. In fact, Jack McCoy was proud of his reputation as a heartless bastard.

It-the folder-- contained evidence that was, at once, both his condemnation and his salvation. It was his salvation in that it provided him with the fuel to stoke the embers of his burnt-out soul. In it was enshrined the only evidence of the only thing that had gone right in his indurate existence, the only proof that he, too, could feel and love. Just touching it opened a floodgate of sensations-the smell of her hair, her velvety skin beneath his leathery hands, her breath quickening with his as their passion ascended to a place that made him almost believe in heaven. By day they devoted themselves to the law, but by night they devoted themselves to each other. And that devotion had been her undoing. He'd ruined it, ruined it all, with just one phone call. Seven little numbers punched into a telephone, a conversation of less than a minute, and fate began its immutable course.

He'd been too drunk to drive. That was natural, since he'd downed nearly a fifth of Scotch that evening. But he wasn't so drunk that he didn't know he was too drunk to drive. And being the cheap bastard that he was, too cheap to call a taxi, he called her, paged her actually, to pick him up at that smoky pub. And being the impatient bastard that he was, too impatient to wait for her, he'd called a cab anyway and left before she arrived. And now the bastard was alone, eternally alone, reaching for that all-too-familiar bottle of comfort. *Comfort,* he smirked. *Anesthesia,* he corrected himself and welcomed the Scotch burning in his throat presaging the obliging oblivion that lay just a few drinks away.

A knock at the door preceded the entrance of Adam Schiff, houndstooth fedora jammed on his hoary head. "One count of Manslaughter with the maximum sentence; not too bad for a day's work, Jack."

"He'll be out 5. For murdering a mother and her unborn child. It should have been 2 counts of Murder 2."

Schiff shook his head, "You fought hard and the jury gave you what the law allows."

"The law should allow that he formed intent to kill the instant he decided to drive with a blood alcohol level of .21." Another shot burned down his gullet and he slid closer to Comfort.

"You'll get the next one."

"Cold comfort to the widower."

The DA nodded and the door snicked shut. He opened the drawer further, pushing the contents to the back. Just a little of the file folder peeked out from beneath the rumpled shirt. His fingers trembled as they hesitated over it before, finally, pulling it from the drawer and laying it, open, on the battered desk. Tears welled up, obscuring his vision, but he had no need for eyes for he knew the words by heart. The victim's name-Claire Kincaid-, age, date of death, and cause of death were all the same as on the coroner's report attached to her Certificate of Death filed with the State of

New York. But that official report was incomplete, he knew, for he'd made it so. He'd convinced the female coroner to sign a report that left off just a few details that might have been distressful to the victim's family and colleagues. Not that she had done anything to be embarrassed about--she'd earned the respect of colleagues and opponents on both sides of the bar. And the measly details he'd concealed were of no importance to the law or to anyone. Except him, Jack McCoy, Assistant District Attorney for the borough of Manhattan, the arrogant bastard renowned for sleeping with every one of his female assistants until Claire Kincaid. But she was different. Her strength, her integrity, her skill formed a steely core that was seemingly covered in silk and velvet. How could he resist? Yet she deserved better than to be known simply as another of McCoy's Assistant/Lovers. And the information contained in the original coroner's report would have diminished her to just that. McCoy's girlfriend. McCoy's *pregnant* girlfriend.

Bastards. They would belittle her to that just because she had loved him. More Scotch fueled his journey to oblivion. A boy. It would have been a boy. But they both--his Claire and his son--had died that night he'd been too impatient to wait for her. If he'd waited they'd still be alive, filling his soul with their spirits. But all that remained was emptiness. On the nights, like this one, when the memories beat a doleful tattoo upon his hollow heart, he'd try to drown it out. Even though it had never worked, still he tried. He poured another dose and watched it while punching the telephone pad. Mindlessly he waited for an answer; thankfully the answer came from a machine.

"Mr. Davis, this is Jack McCoy with the Manhattan DA's office. The jury gave him 5 years. I wish I could have done better for you, Mr. Davis, for them. I'm," he cleared his throat, "sorry, so very sorry." He choked out the final words. Gulping the contents of the glass, he finally reached that place where the anguish was but a distant thunder. Tenderly he closed the file folder, replacing it in the drawer beneath the bottle. Locking the drawer with a rattle of keys, he gazed stupidly at his motorcycle helmet for just a moment before stabbing at the telephone pad. "I need a cab at the Manhattan DA's office," his step was as slurred as his speech. His plodding paces pealed through the empty halls. On the nearly-vacant street he pulled his coat around him, the heat from the liquor no match for the hollow pall of solitude.

"Going home, Mister?" the cabbie asked when he'd flopped into the empty back seat.

"Not yet," the passenger replied thickly. "Not for a very long time."

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Thanks for reading!

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N. Y. Smith

The Minismith

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